

## BAPTISM,—IS IT IMMERSION?

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I approach this question with the spirit of a sincere student and seacher after truth. I have no desire to mislead searching souls by teaching false, erroneous and dangerous doctrine thus bringing upon myself the condemnation of high heaven. Nor can I remain silent or preserve an attitude of indifference in regard to any one specific injunction of our Lord and Master. I trust therefore that the words presented here in support of the proposition; Immersion, and immersion only, is Baptism will receive respectful attention. My dear friend, brother I. D. Bowman elsewhere shows *Trine Immersion* to be the Scriptural and Apostolic mode of administering Christian Baptism. I shall be confined simply to the determination of the specific act to be performed in the administration of this ordinance.

## THE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY.

The sole and sufficient authority of the Scriptures in every and all matters of religion is recognized. There is, there can be, no higher source of ultimate appeal in disputed matters of religion. All Christians must grant this claim or impeach the wisdom of Jesus Christ. It is then to the New Testament Scriptures that we must appeal in all our efforts to determine *what* is enjoined upon us, either by way of *positive* or *moral* precepts.

## INTERPRETATION.

The vastly differing and conflicting dogmas and practices have arisen from the different methods of interpretation employed. And very much of bitterness in discussion and division have been occasioned by the quarrel over the interpretations championed by contending parties. Why not go back to Jesus, the Apostles, and the recorded Word? Take the meaning of the word in question now. What does *baptizo* mean? Certainly a signification given to this word, in interpreting the passages in which it occurs, which is in harmony with the sum and spirit of Scriptural teachings, supported also by the practices of the Apostolic age, by the use of the word in contemporaneous literature, and by the opinions of the most eminent scholars in every department of learning of every century since its incorporation in the Divine Commission,—such a signification as over against one resting for its chief support upon *assumption* and *expediency* and a *plea of indifference* appeals with overwhelming force to the candid enquirer for acceptance.

## THE QUESTION STATED.

After the resurrection of our Lord Jesus

He continued with the Apostles for forty days "speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God." Acts 1: 3. Among the "things" which Jesus spake near the close of this period are the words "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: \* \* \* Matt. 28: 19, 20.

Let us analyze this commission to determine the things specifically enjoined.

1. Go.
2. Make disciples; disciple or teach; instruct in the first principles.
3. Baptize.
4. Teach—to observe; give proper pastoral care.

Now, my dear reader, here you have the words of the Master instituting baptism. Is it not strange that the world could always understand what Jesus said in this commission save in the third item? And that the meaning of this word *baptize* is so obscure, or diversified that we never can be sure as to its meaning?

No. The Lord Jesus did not employ a word, the meaning of which was doubtful or indifferent and of no importance, in instituting an ordinance upon which salvation rests even in the least degree. Nor did the Holy Spirit guide the writer in the choice of a word to designate a religious rite upon which such great weight is laid, the meaning of which was not then most clearly understood, and which if then known is not to be determined now. Nor did the apostles fail to understand the exact import of Christ's words in the commission; and that they knew the *specific act* enjoined by their Lord and how to perform it is evident from their work as recorded in Acts. (See Acts 2: 37-42: 8: 5-17; 8: 26-39; 10: 34-38; 16: 14, 15; 16: 25-34; 18: 8.) Specific injunctions demand explicit observance.

The question then is, What does the word "*baptize*" mean? Or to state it in other words, perhaps more correctly, since the word "*baptize*" is the *Anglicised* form of the Greek verb "*baptizo*," What does the verb "*baptizo*" mean?

## II. SCRIPTURE REFERENCES TO BAPTISM.

I shall now examine briefly the references in the New Testament where baptism is mentioned. From these several references we may be able to arrive at some definite conclusion as to the meaning of the word.

1. References to John's baptism in General: Matt. 3: 1-6; Mk. 1: 4, 5; Luke 3: 3, 7, 8; John 1: 25-28; John 3: 23.
2. Baptism of Jesus: Matt. 3: 13-

17; Mk. 1: 9-11; Lk. 3: 21, 22; John 1: 32-34.

3. Other references to baptism in the Gospels: John 3: 22; John 4: 1-3; Matt. 28: 18-20; Mk. 16: 15, 16.

4. Baptism in the "Acts": Acts 2: 37, 38; 8: 12, 13; 8: 36-39; 9: 17, 18; 10: 44-48; 16: 13-15; 16: 32-34; 18: 8, 25; 19: 1-5; 22: 16.

5. Baptism in the Epistles: Rom. 6: 3-5; I Cor. 1: 13-16; I Cor. 10: 2; Gal. 3: 27; Eph. 4: 5; Col. 2: 12; I Pet. 3: 20, 21.

For want of space I could not give the language of these references. Please read them carefully. I now pass to observe,

1. That the *places* where baptism is said to have been administered are in the case of John's ministry described by the words "In Jordan," "In the river of Jordan," "In Bethabara beyond Jordan," and "In Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there." As to the baptism of Jesus the words are "Jesus . . . was baptized of John in Jordan." Philip and the Eunuch "came unto a certain water." And Lydia was "by a river side" when she accepted Christ and when she was baptized she received the apostles into her house.

2. That "*much water*" answers the question why a certain place was selected for baptism. Whether the words "*hoti hudata polla*" be translated "because there was much water," or "because there were many waters, (sources, fountains, or springs of water,)" does not affect the argument. "*Hoti*" is a Greek particle used to introduce causal sentences which express *cause* or *reason* and is translated "*because*." Six versions of this Gospel are before me and every one translates "*hoti*," *because*. One author translates the passage thus: "And John also was baptizing at Aenon, near Salim, *for there was an abundance of water there*." This causal clause is meaningless unless there is some relation between the act of baptism and the quantity of water necessary.

3. That those baptized were baptized in or into (*en* or *eis*) water. Take the Greek phrase "*en hudati*" and it would be difficult to make it mean anything else than "*in water*." *En* is used with the dative of the thing in which one is immersed. (Prof. Thayer.) Take also the phrase "*eis to hudor*," "into the water," and we have a yet stronger expression. In Mk. 1: 1, we have these words "And was baptized of John in (*eis*—into,) the Jordan," better "into the Jordan." Philip led the Eunuch "into (*eis*) the water" to baptize him. *Eis* (into) marks the element into which the immersion is made. (Thayer.) What but immersion